

Irish Language Scheme

Wexford Local Authorities 2010-2013



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Message from Chairperson:

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Wexford Local Authorities Irish Language Scheme which outlines the future development of the Irish Language and provision of services through Irish in Wexford Local Authorities. The Irish Language Scheme is a means to develop and support Irish further in the County

The Irish Language Scheme was approved by Eamon Ó Cuív, Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, in November 2009 and the Scheme commences on 11 January 2010. Wexford Local Authorities are fully committed to ensuring that the actions outlined in the Scheme are achieved within the lifetime of the Scheme.

**Councillor Anna Fenlon,
Chairperson.**

Message from the County Manager:

Wexford Local Authorities, under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 have developed this Irish Language Scheme which will support the Irish Language in our County. Under this scheme, we have made many commitments and I look forward to working together over the next three years to achieve these commitments to develop and support the Irish Language further within Wexford Local Authorities.

**Eddie Breen,
County Manager.**

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background:

Wexford Local Authorities have prepared its Irish Language Scheme under *Section 11* of the Official Languages Act 2003 (“the Act”).

Section 11 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services that they provide

- through the medium of Irish;
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English.

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

Guidelines for preparation of a Scheme:

The Scheme was prepared with regard to the Guidelines under *Section 12* of the Act issued by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Wexford Local Authorities published a notice under *Section 13* on 8th October, 2008, in local and national newspapers, inviting representations in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme under *Section 11* from any interested parties. All submissions made are available on www.wexford.ie

Wexford Local Authorities recognises that our customers and the public have the right to choose to do business with us in their preferred language and that they will be facilitated in their dealings with us, whether that is through Irish or English. The primary objective of the Official Languages Act 2003 is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

This Scheme includes a brief overview of the services provided by Wexford Local Authorities and the level of services already available through Irish, English and bilingually.

There are certain services which each customer is entitled to in accordance with the directly-applicable provisions of the Act i.e. response to correspondence in Irish through Irish; publications available in Irish i.e. Annual Report.

Research Undertaken:

In the preparation of this Scheme, Wexford Local Authorities undertook the following consultation process:

- Seeking submissions from the public on the preparation of a scheme. Wexford Local Authorities received two submissions from the public during the consultation period (the submissions can be viewed on www.wexford.ie)
- An Internal Audit of services which are provided through Irish by each Department.

- An Internal survey of the Staff of Wexford Local Authorities on their proficiency in Irish and willingness to develop their Irish language to provide services through the medium of Irish.

Commencement Date of Scheme:

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme will commence with effect from **11 January 2010**, and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to *Section 15* of the Act, whichever is the earlier.

Overview of Wexford Local Authorities:

Wexford Local Authorities comprises of Wexford County Council, the primary unit of local government in County Wexford with responsibility for administration of the County, plus three Town Councils and one Borough Council – New Ross Town Council; Enniscorthy Town Council; Gorey Town Council and Wexford Borough Council. Each Town and Borough Council, within the County area, comes under the jurisdiction of the County Manager.

Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan is the overall framework for the organisation, setting out goals and objectives in respect of its many functions and activities. It will assist the Local Authorities reviewing its activities, objectives, priorities and resources.

Wexford Local Authorities are involved in a diverse range of activities and impacts on the lives of everyone living in, visiting or doing business in County Wexford. It is necessary, therefore, to identify the core objectives of the organisation in order to focus on the outcomes expected. The core values of the Local Authorities include:

- Upholding the democratic participation of our elected members and citizens, and respecting their roles.
- Commitment to ensure that our policies and plans incorporate the principles of sustainable development, respecting the present environment and protecting it to ensure viability for future generations.
- Ensuring the provision of quality service, based on the principle of customer focused delivery.
- Recognising that our human resources are our most valuable asset, and a primary objective is to ensure their training, development and safety at work.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Wexford Local Authorities is “to improve the quality of life of the people of Wexford by representing the interests of citizens and providing services to meet their needs”.

The physical place:

County Wexford is located in the Southeast corner of Ireland. The County has four main towns, Wexford, Enniscorthy, Gorey and New Ross with a population of 131,749 (CSO population figures 2006).

County Wexford enjoys a rare mix of mountains, valleys, rivers, flora, fauna and breathtaking beaches spanning 200 km of coastline.

Overview of the Services provided by Wexford Local Authorities:

The functions and services of Wexford Local Authorities are classified into eight programme groups, as follows:

- Housing and Building
- Road Transportation and Safety
- Water Supply and Sewerage (Water Services)
- Development Incentives and Controls
- Environmental Protection
- Recreation and Amenity
- Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare
- Miscellaneous Services

Principal points of customer contact:

The primary service points for the Local Authorities are as follows:

- County Hall, Wexford;
- Wexford Borough Council, The Quay, Wexford;
- New Ross Town Council, The Tholsel, New Ross;
- Enniscorthy Town Council, Market Square, Enniscorthy;
- Gorey Town Council & Gorey Area Office, The Avenue, Gorey;
- Enniscorthy Area Office, Old Dublin Road, Enniscorthy.

There is also a network of Libraries throughout the County, all of which have extensive customer contact. Staff of Local Authority depots have contact with our customers both in their homes and in the public domain.

The Local Authorities also interact with a wide range of Government Departments, Oireachtas Members, State Agencies, Social Partners, Local Development Organisations, Community Groups and Local Private Businesses.

Extensive and growing use is made of the Internet in the Local Authorities dealings with its customers. This will be an important medium in terms of our future promotion of the Irish language in Wexford Local Authorities.

CHAPTER 2

Summary of Services / Activities provided by the Local Authorities Departments and levels of Irish Language proficiency

This Chapter sets out the position in relation to service provision/activities by individual departments within Wexford Local Authorities and the level of Irish proficiency in each of these.

Currently, no department of Wexford Local Authorities is capable of delivering its service comprehensively through the medium of Irish and English. Wexford Local Authorities have a nominated Irish Officer.

Environment:

The main objectives of the Environment Department is to protect and enhance the environment of County Wexford; control the collection, recovery, recycling, movement and disposal of waste in the county and to incorporate sustainability into waste management systems and monitor, control and reduce pollution that is adversely affecting the natural environment.

The services/roles can be broadly grouped under the following headings:

- Waste Management
- Litter Management
- Environment Education and Community Involvement
- Coastal Zone Management
- Water Quality Management
- Air Quality Management
- Dog Warden Service/Pound Service
- Environment Enforcement

The following documents/signage are available in both Irish and English from Environment:

- Joint Waste Management Plan for the South East Region
- Litter Fines
- Some of the Water Safety Signage
- Beach Bye Law Fines

Water Services:

The Water Services section is responsible for the provision and maintenance of the following services:

- Water Supply
- Sewerage Services
- Public Conveniences
- Burial Grounds
- Land Drainage
- Works in partnership with the Group Scheme Sector to provide quality drinking water for that Sector.

There are currently no services available from the Water Services Section in Irish.

Emergency Services:

Civil Defence

The object of the Civil Defence is to facilitate, through the Local Authorities, Civil Defence responses for emergency relief and support to ensure the operation of vital services and maintenance of public life. This service is staffed by volunteers who contribute their time in serving the local community.

Fire Service:

The mission statement of the Fire Services is *“to provide and maintain an efficient and effective operational fire service, promote awareness of fire safety and improve fire safety standards in buildings”*.

The five retained fire brigades are located in the towns of Wexford, Gorey, Enniscorthy, New Ross and Bunclody. Each brigade is under the command of a Station Officer to whom a Sub-Station Officer and fire fighters report. The Fire Services is responsible for Fire Safety, Dangerous Substances, Building Control – Part B, Fire Safety, Community Fire Safety

There are currently no services available from the Emergency Services Section in Irish.

Planning and Development:

The overall objective is to implement the provisions of the Planning Acts and provide appropriate support measures in order to promote the physical, social and economical well being of the County in the interest of the common good.

Functions of the Planning and Development Section include the following:

- Planning Control
- Pre-planning Enquiries
- Planning Appeals
- Compensation
- Local Authority Developments
- Development Plans
- Local Area Plans
- Planning Register
- Building Control
- Public Rights-Of-Way

There is no need for this in the scheme.

Housing:

The overall aim of the Housing Department is to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment, and as far as possible at a tenure of its choice. The general strategy for realising the overall policy aim is that those who can afford to do so should provide housing for themselves, and those unable to do so from their own resources would have access to social housing or income support and security of tenure in private rented accommodation.

The main functions of the Housing Department are as follows:

- Provision, maintenance and management of local authority housing and traveller accommodation.
- Support for the provision of social housing projects by voluntary housing bodies under the Capital Assistance and Rental Subsidy Schemes.
- Facilitating home ownership through various schemes - tenant purchase, mortgage allowance, shared ownership, low cost housing sites and house purchase loans.
- Improvement works to privately owned houses in lieu of local authority housing, house improvement loans, disabled persons grants and essential repairs grants.
- Enforcement of rent book and accommodation standards Regulations for private rented accommodation.
- Implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

The Council carries out an “*Assessment of Housing Needs*” every three years to establish housing requirements in its area. The actual number of houses built or acquired in any particular year depends on the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government housing start allocation.

There are currently no services available from the Housing Department in Irish.

Community and Enterprise:

The main purpose of the Community and Enterprise Unit is to assist the community and voluntary sector to participate in the new Local Government structures and also to promote the services of the Council to the community. Through the County Development Board and the Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002-2012, the unit aims to co-ordinate the activities of all public agencies working to combat poverty and social exclusion.

The Community and Enterprise unit has responsibility for a number of areas:

- County Development Board and Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002-2010
- Social Inclusion Measures Working Group
- County Wexford Community Forum
- Provide executive support for the Economic & Social Development SPC
- RAPID – New Ross & Wexford
- Local Agenda 21
- Grants - Amenity and Arts Grants / Community Grants / Social & Community Facilities Capital Scheme / Sustainable Community Buildings Scheme
- Research
- Provision of Recreational Facilities – County Playground Scheme
- Local Sports Partnership

The majority of signs in our playgrounds are bilingual.

Arts:

The role of the Arts Office is to offer all sectors of the community equal opportunity to have access to and participate in the arts. The staff work on an ongoing basis with individuals, groups and organisations within the artistic, business and educational communities organising various projects. They provide support by a variety of means including co-ordination, administration, advice and consultation, sponsorship, information database, information dissemination, website, publicity and printing, equipment and materials loan.

The Arts programme reflects the diversity of arts and cultural activity in County Wexford. The programme is divided into four main strands – Arts Education, Community Art, Public Art and Support Services. The following services are developed within the Arts Department:

- Arts Education
- Community Arts
- Youth Arts
- Arts & Disability
- Public Art
- Support Services
- 1% for Art Scheme

The Arts Plan and Public Art Policy are available in Irish and English.

Library & Archive Services:

The public library is an information service. It collects, organises and makes information available. It also helps people to find correct information and use it effectively. The County Library Service aims to meet the work, study and leisure information needs of everyone in the County. It also supports literacy and a love for reading and research. The local library is a community centre, where people find out what's happening locally, go to talks and workshops, meet their neighbours, enjoy exhibitions, borrow books and music, investigate, read the newspapers, and study.

Wexford Public Libraries both borrow materials from and lend books to libraries all over the world. As well as individuals visiting the libraries, local and national organisations work together with the library staff arranging exhibitions, workshops and talks on a broad range of topics of interest to local communities.

There are libraries in Wexford Town, Enniscorthy, New Ross, Enniscorthy and Bunclody

The Staff Library:

The purpose of Wexford Local Authorities Staff Library and Information Service is to provide an inclusive library and information service for all the staff of Wexford Local Authorities, providing equal access to information and knowledge at a single source. The Staff Library has built up a collection of books, journals, reports and multimedia products on subjects of general interest to all staff. The aims of the Staff Library are:

- To establish a single source of information and knowledge on work-related issues
- To support staff engaged in further education and learning
- To facilitate career advancement and personal development
- To encourage the sharing of resources throughout the organisation

Roads

The overall objective of the Roads Department is to develop an adequate public road network to cater for the ever increasing volume of traffic, and to provide the necessary infrastructure to support economic and social development, with due regard for the safety of all road users.

Functions of the Roads Department include:

- Construction of new roads
- Maintenance and improvement of existing roads
- Provision of Public Lighting
- Local Improvements Schemes
- Road Opening Licence
- Taking in Charge
- Abnormal Load Permits
- Temporary Closing of Roads
- Trees & Hedges
- Speed Limits
- Road Safety
- Traffic Management
- Taking in Charge of Private Housing Developments

There are currently no services available from the Roads Department in Irish.

Personnel

The main purpose of the Personnel Section is Human Resource Management. This involves recruitment, manpower planning, staff training & development, superannuation, industrial relations and employees' terms & conditions.

Candidates for all permanent posts have the option of undergoing an Irish Language test.

General Purposes

The General Administration Section provides miscellaneous services to both the public and to all other sections in the Council. It is responsible for the processing of Higher Education Grants, payment of member & staff expenses, purchase and payment of all office furniture, equipment and stationery, placement of advertisements in newspapers and managing all office accommodation.

The Higher Education Grant application form is available in both Irish and English on request.

Workplace Partnership:

The objective of Partnership is *"To achieve joint ownership by management, unions and staff and to replace the adversarial approach to change with an open co-operative process based on effective consultation and participation by all concerned for the progression and implementation of strategic goals, service delivery objectives, and associated action programme"*.

Partnership in each Local Authority, therefore, means:

- Management, unions and employees agreeing on common objectives to make the organisation better for everybody – the public, the staff and the management.

- Putting new structures in place to make this happen
- Giving resources to help make this happen.

There are currently no services available from the Workplace Partnership Section in Irish.

Freedom of Information:

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 1997 is designed to allow public access to information held by public bodies which is not routinely available through other means. Each person has a right to:

- access to records held by the Council
- correction of personal information relating to oneself held by the Council where it is inaccurate, incomplete or misleading
- access to reasons for decisions made by the Council directly affecting oneself
- access to information under the Act is subject to certain exemptions and involves specific procedures and time limits.

The Freedom of Information Office is responsible for the publishing of Wexford Local Authorities Corporate Plan and Annual Report. Both of these publications are available on the website in both Irish and English and in hard copy on request.

Veterinary Services:

The Veterinary Department is responsible for the following:

- Carrying out of official controls in local abattoirs and small meat manufacturing premises in County Wexford.
- Inspection of liquid milk producers holdings
- Supervision of treatment of animals affected with notifiable diseases

There are currently no services available from the Veterinary Services Section in Irish.

Finance

The Finance Department is responsible for the short and long-term financing of the Council's operations, both of a revenue and capital nature. This involves monitoring and control of income and expenditure in all areas.

The services provided by the Finance Department are as follows:

- (1) **Financial Accounting:**
 - Payments and receipts management and control
 - Payroll
 - Control accounts
 - System development and control
 - Annual Financial Statements

- (2) **Management Accounting**
 - Annual Budget
 - Costing
 - Treasury Management
 - Monitoring of financial performance against the Budget
 - Provision of financial advice

- Provision of quality financial management information to Budget Holders

Finance Department is also responsible for Internal Audit, Risk Management, Rates, Credit Control, Procurement, Integration of Financial Systems, Revenue Generation and Collection, Motor Taxation, Prompt Payment of Account.

Motor Tax Renewal Form is available in both Irish and English in the Motor Tax Office and also at the local Garda Stations.

Information & Communications Technology:

Information Technology (IT) provides support services for all other sections of the Local Authorities. The availability of accurate and relevant information enables staff to deliver a quality service to the public. The IT Section supports the concepts of e-democracy, e-government, e-commerce and e-procurement and the use of ICT (Information Communications Technology) to support and enhance customer service. Functions of ICT include:

- Installation and maintenance of hardware
- Systems
- Maintenance and support of networks (Intranet & Internet)
- Geographical Information System (GIS)
- Helpdesk

The ICT Section will play a significant part in promoting and facilitating information and service provision through the medium of the Irish Language on the website.

CHAPTER 3

Scheme Proposals for Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually

Means of Communication with the Public:

Many of Wexford Local Authorities methods of communication with the general public in terms of service provision are currently made available in English only. The methods of communication include:

- Brochures & Information Leaflets
- Application Forms
- Publications
- Press Releases
- Website
- Public Consultations & Community Meetings
- One to one communication at Public Offices
- Education visits to Schools

The primary objective of Wexford Local Authorities in relation to this scheme is to create and foster an atmosphere of bilingualism within all its sections/departments. Irish speaking customers will be encouraged to transact their business in Irish and it is intended that customers and staff alike will be comfortable with conducting official business through the Irish language.

Wexford Local Authorities are committed to securing an adequate number of staff competent to providing a service through Irish in all sections dealing regularly with the public. The following actions are proposed in order to ensure that both the level and standard of our services are improved during the lifetime of this scheme.

Written Documentation:

- The Annual Report, Annual Financial Statement, Corporate Plan and any other documents covered under section 10 of the Official Languages Act 2003 will be published on our website in both Irish and English and on request a hard copy of such documents will be made available.
- From 2010, press releases relating to Irish language issues will be produced bilingually. At least two bilingual press releases / statements in relation to other matters will be issued per annum by Wexford County Local Authorities.
- From the beginning of the scheme, all new application forms and associated/accompanying information leaflets produced by Wexford Local Authorities that deal with the Library Service and Community Development shall be made available bilingually within the one cover (except where this is not practicable because of the size or nature of the document).
- By the end of the scheme, at least four existing application forms and associated/accompanying information leaflets dealing with Community Development and/or the Library Service will be made available bilingually within the one cover (except where this is not practicable because of the size or nature of the document).

Reception/Telephone Service

Receptionists/switchboard operators are the first points of contact with the public. It shall be the policy of Wexford Local Authorities to ensure that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, which is that by 2012:

- Competent reception/switchboard staff give the name of the public body in Irish.
- They are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that they can put members of the public in touch, with the office or officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish, where available.

One-to-One Services

The Library Service will promote the Irish Language as follows:

- Increase the use of Irish among the public
- Ensure that by the end of the scheme an Irish language counter service will be available for the public at all branches of the library (on the basis that all library staff have a minimum level of competence on entry to the service)
- See the use of Irish as a natural practice without pressure or force
- Provide 3% of the book fund in 2009 to Irish Language resources
- Provide a dedicated visible Irish Language area in each Library by 2010.
- Provide links to useful websites by 2010.
- Target a number of bilingual events in each year of the scheme, incl. Irish language authors and activities with a cultural content such as traditional music, new and innovative ideas will be explored also.
- Provide bilingual elements to launches & speeches.

Information Technology:

- Implement a standard disclaimer or message on email correspondence bilingually.
- Establish a generic email address for queries “as Gaeilge”. The Local Authorities will ensure that such queries are addressed promptly in the same manner as English language queries.
- Provide an online listing of staff that are available to provide our services bilingually.
- Develop the Wexford Co. Council website to ensure that the information on the homepage and description of each Department are available bilingually.
- Should the Local Authorities develop any new websites during the course of the scheme, these shall contain bilingual content. Town council websites will be dealt with in the Local Authorities’ second and subsequent schemes.
- The library section of www.wexford.ie will provide links to useful websites by 2010.

- Any new interactive services introduced during the life of this Scheme which allows the general public to make applications or receive benefits on-line will be introduced simultaneously in English and Irish subject to the availability of such services in bilingual format.
- Existing interactive services will be upgraded as soon as resources and pressures on other work allow, subject to the availability of such services in bilingual format.
- Any new computer systems introduced by Wexford Local Authorities during the course of the scheme will be compatible with the Irish language, subject to the availability of the necessary systems from the Local Government Computer Services Board.
- Wexford Local Authorities will ensure that where upgrades are proposed for any existing computer systems, the revised systems will cater for the Irish language, again subject to the availability of the necessary systems from the Local Government Computer Services Board.

Training & Development:

Wexford Local Authorities acknowledges the importance of having a highly trained workforce to ensure efficient and effective delivery of services. If continued improvement is to be sustained, we must develop the knowledge, skills and competencies of staff to their full potential. This involves significant investment in training and development.

- Wexford Local Authorities to source Irish Language classes focused on customer services needs for staff members committed to delivering our services bilingually, subject to available funding.
- All staff will be encouraged and given equal opportunity to improve their Irish language skills through Irish and development courses, and shall be facilitated to attend Irish language classes during office hours.
- Staff members to be notified of the Gaeltacht Scholarship.

Signage:

- Wexford Local Authorities have provided and will continue to provide road signage/street names in Irish and English.
- Provide bilingual signs – department names, etc. in all new Public Buildings e.g. new County Hall; Library Buildings; new Wexford Borough Council

Wexford Local Authorities have provided and will continue to provide signs in Playgrounds in Irish and English. Wexford Local Authorities will ensure that it complies at all times with the provisions of the Official Languages Act 2003 (Section 9) Regulations 2009.

CHAPTER 4

Monitoring, Revision & Publicity of the Agreed Scheme:

Monitoring & Revision:

The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by Section Heads in each of the Sections who are responsible for the implementation of the scheme within their own areas and reporting on a regular basis to their Director of Service/ Town Manager.

Details of progress on the implementation of the provisions of this scheme will be published in Wexford Local Authorities Annual Report.

Publicising of the Agreed Scheme:

The contents of this scheme will be advertised to the general public by means of:

- Press Release
- Official Launch of the Scheme
- Circulation to appropriate agencies, public bodies and individuals who have expressed interest and any individual or agency from whom we received a submission
- Website

A copy of this scheme will be forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

The English language version is the original text of this scheme.